

# Squamish language

**Squamish** (/ˈskwɔːmɪʃ/<sup>[4]</sup> *Sḵw̓xwú7mesh sníchim*, *sníchim* meaning "language") is a Coast Salish language spoken by the Squamish people of the Pacific Northwest. It is spoken in the area that is now called southwestern British Columbia, Canada, centred on their reserve communities in Squamish, North Vancouver, and West Vancouver. An archaic historical rendering of the native *Sḵw̓xwú7mesh* is *Sko-ko-mish* but this should not be confused with the name of the Skokomish people of Washington state. Squamish is most closely related to the Sechelt, Halkomelem, and Nooksack languages.

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## Documentation

Anthropologists and linguists who have worked on the Squamish language go back to the 1880s. The first collection of words was collected by German anthropologist Franz Boas. During the following decade, anthropologist Charles Hill-Tout collected some Squamish words, sentences and stories. In the 1930s, anthropologist Homer Barnett worked with Jimmy Frank to collect information about traditional Squamish culture, including some Squamish words. In the 1950s, Dutch linguist Aert H. Kuipers worked on the first comprehensive grammar of the Squamish language, later published as *The Squamish Language* (1967). In 1968, the British Columbia Language Project undertook more documentation of the Squamish language and culture. Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy, the main collaborators on this project, devised the writing system presently used for Squamish. The Squamish-English bilingual dictionary (edited by Peter Jacobs and Damara Jacobs) was published by the University of Washington Press in 2011.

## Use and language revitalization efforts

In 1990, the Chief and Council of the Squamish people declared Squamish to be the official language of their people, a declaration made to ensure funding for the language and its revitalization.<sup>[5]</sup> In 2010, the First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council considered the language to be "critically endangered" and "nearly extinct", with just ten fluent speakers.<sup>[6]</sup> In 2011, the language was being taught using the "Where Are Your Keys?" technique,<sup>[7]</sup> and a Squamish–English dictionary was also completed in 2011.

A Squamish festival was scheduled for April 22, 2013, with two fluent elders, aiming to inspire more efforts to keep the language alive. Rebecca Campbell, one of the event's organizers, commented:

Squamish	
<span><i>Sḵw̓xwú7mesh sníchim</i></span>	
Pronunciation	<span><span>[sq̣w̥x̥ʷoʔməʃ sniɫʃim]</span></span>
Native <span> </span> to	Canada
Region	British Columbia
Ethnicity	4,280 Squamish people (2018, FPCC) <sup>[1]</sup>
Native speakers	1 (2014, FPCC) <sup>[1]</sup>
Revival	449 Active Language Learners
Language family	<div>Salishan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Coast Salish<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Central<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Squamish</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Writing system	Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (1990) <sup>[2]</sup>
Official status	
Official language <span> </span> in	Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw
Language codes	
<span>ISO 639-3</span>	squ
Glottolog	squa1248 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/1anguoid/id/squa1248</span> ) <sup>[3]</sup>



Bilingual road sign in Squamish and English languages. Seen on Highway 99.

"The festival is part of a multi-faceted effort to ensure the language's long-term survival, not only by teaching it in the schools, but by encouraging parents to speak it at home. Squamish Nation cultural workers, for example, have begun to provide both parents and children with a list of common Squamish phrases that can be used around the home, as a way to reinforce the learning that takes place in the Sea to Sky School District schools. So far 15 families in the Squamish area are part of the program ... "The goal is to revive the language by trying to have it used every day at home — getting the parents on board, not just the children.""[8]

Currently, there are 449 Active Language Learners of the Squamish language.<sup>[9]</sup> In 2014, a Squamish-language program was made available at Capilano University.<sup>[10]</sup> The program, Language and Culture Certificate, is designed to let its respective students learn about the language and culture. Additionally, Simon Fraser University has launched the Squamish Language Academy, in which students learn the Squamish language for two years. The aforementioned programs increase the number of active language learners each year.

## Phonology

### Vowels

The vowel system in Squamish phonemically features four sounds, /i/, /a/, /u/, as well as a schwa sound /ə/, each with phonetic variants.<sup>[11]</sup> There is a fair amount of overlap between the vowel spaces, with stress and adjacency relationships as main contributors. The vowel phonemes of Squamish are listed below in IPA with the orthography following it.

	Front	Central	Back
High	/i/ i		/u/ u
Open-mid		/ə/ e	
Low		/a/ a	

### Vowel variants<sup>[12]</sup>

/i/ has four main allophones [e, ɛ, ɛj, i], which surface depending on adjacency relationships to consonants, or stress.

- [ɛ] surfaces preceding uvulars consonants, and can exist in a non-adjacent relationship so long as no other vowels intervene. [ɛj] surfaces preceding a uvular consonant, before a non-uvular consonant.
- [e] surfaces in non-uvular environments when /i/ is in stressed syllables.

/a/ has four main allophones [ɛ, æ, ɔ, ɑ].

- [ɛ, æ] surfaces when palatals are present (with the exception of /j/)
- [ɔ] surfaces when labial/labialized consonants are present (with the exception of /w/.
- [ɑ] surfaces when not in the prior conditions. Stress usually does not change the vowel.

/u/

- [o] surfaces in stressed syllables.

### Consonants

The consonant phonemes of Squamish, first in IPA and then in the Squamish orthography: <sup>[12]</sup>

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>			<u>Postalveolar</u>	<u>Velar</u>		<u>Uvular</u>		<u>Glottal</u>
			<u>simple</u>	<u>affricate</u>	<u>lateral</u>		<u>plain</u>	<u>labialized</u>	<u>plain</u>	<u>labialized</u>	
<b>Stop and affricate</b>	<b>plain</b>	/p/ <i>p</i>	/t/ <i>t</i>	/t͡s/ <i>ts</i>		/t͡ʃ/ <i>ch</i>	(/k/) <i>(k)</i>	/kʷ/ <i>kw</i>	/q/ <i>q</i>	/qʷ/ <i>qw</i>	/ʔ/ <i>ʔ</i>
	<b>ejective</b>	/p' / <i>p'</i>	/t' / <i>t'</i>	/t͡s' / <i>ts'</i>	/t͡ɬ' / <i>tl'</i>	/t͡ʃ' / <i>ch'</i>	(/k' /) <i>(k')</i>	/k'ʷ / <i>kw'</i>	/q' / <i>q'</i>	/q'ʷ / <i>qw'</i>	
<b>Fricative</b>			/s/ <i>s</i>		/ɬ/ <i>lh</i>	/ʃ/ <i>sh</i>		/xʷ/ <i>xw</i>	/χ/ <i>χ</i>	/χʷ/ <i>χw</i>	
<b>Nasal and approximant</b>	<b>plain</b>	/m/ <i>m</i>	/n/ <i>n</i>		/l/ <i>l</i>	/j/ <i>y</i>		/w/ <i>w</i>			/h/ <i>h</i>
	<b>glottalized</b>	/m̥/ <i>m'</i>	/n̥/ <i>n'</i>		/l̥/ <i>l'</i>	/j̥/ <i>y'</i>		/w̥/ <i>w'</i>			

## Modifiers

Other symbols include the glottal stop and stress marks.

/ʔ/ or ʔ represent a glottal stop. Glottalization can occur on a variety of consonants (e.g: m/n/l/y/w), and after or before vowels.

## Orthography

The following table shows the vowels and consonants and their respective orthographic symbols. Vowels marked with an asterisk indicate phonological variation. Consonants are sorted by place (bilabial to uvular descending) and voicing (Left - Voiceless, Right - Voiced). Note that, Squamish contains no voiced plosives, as is typical of Salish language family languages. Because the / ʔ/ character glyph is not found on typewriters and did not exist in most fonts until the widespread adoption of Unicode, the Squamish orthography still conventionally represents the glottal stop with the number symbol 7; the same character glyph is also used as a digit to represent the number seven.

The other special character is a stress mark, or accent (á, é, í or ú). This indicates that the vowel should be realized as louder and slightly longer.<sup>[2]</sup>

Phoneme	Orthography	Phoneme	Orthography
<b>Vowels</b> <sup>[13][12]</sup>			
/i/	i	/ɪ/	i
*/ɛ/	i	/e/	i
*/æ/	a	*/ɛy/	i
/u/	u	*/ʊ/	u
*/o/	u	*/ɔ/	u
/ə/	e	*/ʌ/	e
/a/	a	*/ɑ/	ao
<b>Consonants</b>			
/p/	p	/m/	m
/p' /	p̑	/ʔm/	m̑
/t/	t	/n/	n
/tɬ' /	t̑	/ʔn/	n̑
/tʃ/	ts	/ɬ/	lh
/ts' /	t̑s	/z/	z
/k/	k	/z' /	ẏ
/kʷ/	kw	/h/	h
/k' /	k̑	/j/	y
/kʷ' /	k̑w	/j̥/	ý
/q/	ḱ	/l/	l
/qʷ/	ḱw	/ɭ/	l'
/qχ' /	ḱw̑		
/qχʷ' /	ḱw̑ʷ		
/ʔ/	ʔ		
/ʃ/	sh		
/s/	s		
/χ/	χ		
/χʷ/	xw		

## Grammar

Squamish, like other Salish languages, has two main types of words: Clitics and full words. Clitics can be articles, or predicative clitics. Squamish words are able to be subjected to reduplication, suffixation, prefixation. A common prefix is the nominalizer prefix /s-/, which occurs in a large number of fixed combinations with verb stems to make nouns (e.g: /t'iq/ "to be cold" -> /s-t'iq/ "(the) cold").

### Reduplication

Squamish uses a variety of reduplication types, serving to express functions such as pluralization, diminutive form, aspect, etc.

### Syntax

Squamish sentences follow a Verb-Subject-Object form (the action precedes the initiator and the initiator of an action precedes the goal). Sentences typically begin with a predicate noun, but may also begin with a transitive, intransitive, or passive verb.

The table below summarizes the general order of elements in Squamish. Referents are nominal.

Order:	1	2	3	4	5
	Noun (predicate)		Subject		
	Verb (intransitive)	R2 (other referent related term)	Subject		R1(referant related term)
	Verb (Transitive)		Subject	Object	
	Verb (Passive)	R1(Initiator of action)	Subject		R2 (other referent related term)

## See also

- [Squamish Nation](#)
- [History of Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh longshoremen, 1863–1963](#)

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## External links

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